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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA



CONFERENCE on **YOUTH** and ALCOHOL



sponsors

The Governor's Advisory Council on Alcoholism

and

The Pennsylvania Department of Health

This report of the nine Area Conferences on Youth and Alcohol is presented as a matter of record, without editorial comment. It contains:

1. The dates and locations of each Conference.
2. A sample program format.
3. Attendance and cost report.
4. Questionnaire answers.
5. Narrative report.
6. Statement of Conference Purpose and Plan.
7. Reports of Group Discussions
 - a. Education
 - b. Attitudes
 - c. Responsibilities
 - d. Regulations
8. Where do we go from Here?
9. Listing of Program Principals
10. Acknowledgements

The Report
of the
Area Conferences on Youth and Alcohol
1966 – 1967

Sponsored by:
The Governor's Advisory Council on Alcoholism
and
The Pennsylvania Department of Health

Northwest Area

September 30, 1966

Kane Jr. High School, Kane

October 1, 1966

Meadville Area High School, Meadville

Southwest Area

March 4, 1967

Upper St. Clair High School, Bridgeville

March 11, 1967

Norwin High School, Irwin

Northeast Area

April 1, 1967

Abington Heights High School, Clarks Summit

Central Area

April 15, 1967

Southern Huntingdon Area High School, Orbisonia

April 22, 1967

Theodore Roosevelt Jr. High School, Williamsport

Southeast Area

April 29, 1967

Wyomissing High School, Wyomissing

May 6, 1967

Plymouth Whitemarsh High School, Plymouth Meeting

Program Format

8:30 a.m.	Registration
9:00 a.m.	General Session Conference Chairman, presiding Invocation Welcome to the School
9:30 a.m.	Purpose of the Conference – a youth
9:45 a.m.	“These are the Facts” – a physician
10:45 a.m.	Discussion Groups – youth leaders
12:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:30 p.m.	Discussion Groups – continued
3:00 p.m.	Intermission
3:30 p.m.	Youth Panel “This is What We Think About” Education Responsibilities Regulations Attitudes
4:00 p.m.	“Where Do We Go From Here?” – youth
4:15 p.m.	Benediction

AREA CONFERENCES

Statistics

1. 712 students returned the questionnaires.
This represents 385 *males* and 327 *females*.
2. 619 participants were aged 16 and 17 years of age.
Others ranged in age from 14 to 19.
3. 506 said religion did not affect their attitude about drinking.
204 said religion did have an influence on their attitude.
4. 418 homes have alcoholic beverages available.
5. 299 students reported that both parents drink.
188 students have only one parent who drinks.
6. 351 young people drink alcoholic beverages.
183 reported drinking only occasionally or rarely.
120 have parental approval.
179 drink at home.
104 drink at friend's homes.
89 said they drink in cars or at drive-in movies.
26 reported drinking out of state.
22 drink in restaurants or taverns.
7. 128 like the taste.
64 drink because their friends drink.
60 said it was a family custom.
50 drink for curiosity.
34 drink for the thrill or excitement.
5 drink to be popular.
8. 286 do not drink because of the harm to the body.
266 said parents disapproval was their reason for abstaining.
238 abstain because of laws and legal age requirement.
202 dislike the taste.
138 have religious reasons for abstaining.
85 abstain because of family position.
9. 177 prefer beer.
142 like wine better than other alcoholic beverages.
130 drink liquor.
10. 31 had been in trouble with parents and friends because of drinking.
5 had been arrested for illegal possession.
3 have had trouble at school.
1 said he had been arrested for drunken driving.

AREA CONFERENCES (Continued)

11. 151 have experienced trouble due to the drinking of others.

12. 114 said they had been intoxicated.

336 felt the legal age should remain at 21 years of age.

223 would like it lowered to 18.

10 suggested no legal age limit.

1 said drinking should not be legal at any age.

NOTE: Some questions permitted more than one answer. Some questions were unanswered, so could not be counted in these statistics. For this reason, figures do not always agree.

AREA CONFERENCES ON YOUTH AND ALCOHOL

Attendance

Area Dates	Students	Adults	Schools	Counties	Cost
Northwest Area September 30, 1966 October 1, 1966	169	45	62	11	725.00
Southwest Area March 4, 1967 March 11, 1967	279	78	150	12	1,258.19
Northeast Area April 1, 1967	94	19	44	8	303.13
Central Area April 15, 1967 April 22, 1967	187	72	62	18	587.33
Southeast Area April 29, 1967 May 6, 1967	368	108	159	16	1,977.29
TOTALS	1,097	322	477	65	\$ 4,850.94

PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCES ON YOUTH AND ALCOHOL

Two hundred and forty-one young people from 55 of the 67 counties attended the Statewide Conference held in Philadelphia on April 30, 1966. One year and one week later, 1,097 high school students from 65 of the 67 counties had participated in one of the five area conferences. Because of distances and travel inconveniences, it was necessary to divide four areas into two sections, therefore 9 area meetings will be reported.

The Conference programs were planned by a committee of young people in each area, with assistance from a minimal number of adults. A similar format and method of operation was used throughout all Area Conferences. All discussion leaders, recorders and panel participants were young people, selected by the youth planning committees. One adult was carefully chosen to be the resource person for each discussion group. Frank and open discussion was encouraged at the planning stage and during the Conferences. All opinions, both youths and adults were respected and a splendid rapport developed between people of several generations.

The student participants were selected by the schools. Each high school, public, private and parochial, in the Commonwealth, was invited by letter and personal contact to send two or four students. Four hundred and seventy-seven schools responded. High schools were selected as the site for the Conferences in locales where they would be equi-distant geographically from each section of the area. The cooperation of the schools was outstanding in all areas and in those schools selected as the Conference sites.

A registration fee of \$1.00 was paid by all youth and adults attending. Fees collected in one area helped to pay for the planning meetings and briefing sessions of the next Conference. In several areas, it was necessary to have overnight lodging for the leadership groups who came together for a pre-conference briefing session. These were generally held the night before the Conference. The total cost of all these meetings was \$1,743.89 paid entirely from the registration fees. Conference meals and bus transportation were contracted for by the Pennsylvania Department of Health at a total cost of \$3,107.55.

As in the Statewide Conference, Education, Attitudes, Responsibilities and Regulations were the topics for the discussion groups and panel presentations at each Conference. Pertinent points from the recorders notes have been compiled and are recorded elsewhere in this report. The Conference purpose and directions for future conferences entitled "Where Do We Go From Here?" were prepared and presented by the youth.

Even though the adults remained very much in the background during these Conferences, it would be difficult to account for the time and effort given by school and community leaders to make these Conferences meaningful experiences for the young people. While only 332 adults who were in attendance at the Conferences are reported in the statistics, it is reasonable to believe that several thousand were involved in some phase of the operation.

These Conferences were designed to acquaint young people with the facts about drinking, to encourage them to discuss alcohol in the youth society and to help them think about their responsibilities as well as their expectations. These were exploration meetings. At no time were there any directions given for or against drinking. The goal was to discover with the young people what they want to know and how we as adults can most effectively meet these needs.

STATEMENT OF CONFERENCE PURPOSE AND PLAN

For the past few weeks, many of you who were invited to attend this conference on Youth and Alcohol, today, have probably been wondering what we're going to do, why we're here, and what we hope to accomplish? This meeting is for youth; the conference is an "exploration" of youth's viewpoint in relation to alcohol. Explore – according to Webster, explore means "to travel in a region unknown or little known in order to discover." We hope to discover new viewpoints and ideas on alcohol from the youth in attendance.

But exactly what are we to explore? Some of you may feel that the subject is alcoholism; however, it's nothing of the sort – the focus of this meeting isn't to show how teenagers may someday become alcoholics. Quite to the contrary, we want to ask ourselves "Should we use alcohol, and, if so, how?" We want to talk freely with one another about our relation to alcohol.

Adults have been talking for years and years about this subject; they haven't been able to solve the problem – so they have decided to stop conversing and ask us our opinions. From this conference, we hope to derive the younger generation's viewpoint on alcohol and its effects.

As we proceed through the day's activities, and as we share our ideas with others, many will form new opinions. Today, we youth are more mobile than any other generation has ever been. Because we've become so mobile, naturally we seek amusements farther away from home. In one sense, mobility means freedom, and freedom carries responsibility – not only responsibility to society, but also to ourselves and to our parents.

It is quite difficult for us youth to be fully aware of the changing world in recent years, for even before we were born, the world was constantly changing. However, we have been subjected to the varied results of this mode, and this entails responsibilities and attitudes.

Whether we know it or not, society influences us every minute of our lives. We teenagers have found that our thinking on different subjects quite often does not run parallel to that of our elders. There has always been a gap between parents and children, because of the different generation in which they were raised. This, therefore, is one of the main reasons that we are here today. We must make an effort to communicate our ideas.

Naturally, as in other phases of our lives, we must seek guidance from experienced people. We have requested knowledgeable adults to sit in on our discussion groups today to serve only as resource persons. By no means will the adults sermonize or take over the proceedings. In each group, a youth leader will guide the flow of ideas, but it is the adult's privilege to interject his ideas on the various questions which are raised.

From this conference, no resolutions are expected to arise; merely we want to gain knowledge from sharing our experiences.

Finally, each one of you has been invited for the significant and useful contribution you can make. We sincerely hope that you will cultivate this opportunity to the best advantage. As you leave here this afternoon, we hope that you will carry with you a commitment – a commitment of new ideas and thoughts that will be acted upon and shared with others.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

Each group, ranging in size from 10 to 15 members, was led by a youth discussion leader, had a youth recorder and an adult resource person. Each group was designed to encourage the maximum participation. Students were chosen on a geographic basis, each from a different county or school, as far as practical.

Discussion was based on four major areas, Education, Attitudes, Responsibilities and Regulations. There was no attempt to influence students or to inhibit the students in their free and open discussion.

EDUCATION

Some lectures are confusing since they are often contrary to fact, one-sided, and end up by "talking down" to the group. Young people need an approach to alcohol that fits today and treats the teenagers as a person.

Adults should be more aware and try to understand – not criticize. Education should be directed towards both parents and students. Education in schools should be similar to this conference.

Alcohol education in schools is inadequate. It should include discussion, unbiased facts, (physical, mental, psychological) and be started at the elementary level. Education should bring out the good and bad points about alcohol. It should not be just prohibited without an explanation.

Presenting the subject of alcohol as a normal social practice would be better than the "scare approach."

Most schools emphasize total abstinence. It would make an impression if they would teach how to drink safely. Knowing the facts make drinking less tempting and makes the individual more responsible.

Parents should do more to educate their children about the use of alcohol, and they should not just ignore the issue. However, they should not try to offer instruction on the aspects of a problem that they do not understand themselves.

Some young people hesitate to talk in front of their teachers. This is why some class discussions never get off the ground and never do any good.

Education is important, but attitude is more important. Teaching must be carefully done to prevent "rebellion."

If young people knew the facts and were allowed to talk about it, in school, at home, or in church, they would lose interest in experimenting.

Alcohol education, like sex education, needs open and frank discussion.

Education could be the major answer to the problem although if people are always told the negative points constantly, they will want to try it out of spite.

Parental, religious, and school education on alcohol should start at an early age. Social activities are geared now to the use of alcohol at parties, summer dances, etc.

ATTITUDES

Drinking is not a matter of right or wrong. Some drink because it is something to do with others. It makes a common bond.

No one is forced to drink. Some people don't know how to say no.

If friends are true friends, they wouldn't cast you out because you didn't drink.

Youth centers become boring after junior high school. Drinking never becomes boring.

Youth drinkers do not want to drink at home or alone, they want to be seen by the crowd.

Drinking means "status" to some. To others drinking is a sign of immaturity.

Stop and say, when "drinkers" call you *chicken*, "do I really want to be accepted by these kind of people?"

Drinking is done more or less because it is forbidden — it's a challenge to defy the law.

Most of the boys would not date girls that drink, but the girls even if they didn't drink wanted to date boys that drink.

Boys don't think much of girls who drink because it isn't "feminine."

One boy remarked, "They say kids don't have any problems. I've got some. Maybe I wouldn't drink them away, but I've got parents who understand pretty well. Some don't you know." The group then agreed it was really important for parents and children to have a "clear frequency" for communication.

We don't like to be called rebellious when we drink. It's just the way adults explain our behavior. Adults encourage our drinking by passing it off in this way.

Conclusion was reached that attitudes were now more important than laws; attitudes are the teenagers own rather than those of parents and are generally formed by the time one reaches eighteen.

Because drinking is associated with being sociable, it presents a problem for everyone. It is basic for everyone to want to be social. Man is a social human being.

RESPONSIBILITIES

We have responsibility to set a good example for our adolescent brothers and sisters. We must be responsible for our own actions, to protect our reputations and keep self-respect. We have no right to do things that will hurt us.

We are responsible to our parents and should be worthy of the trust they place in us.

It is a young person's responsibility to uphold the laws, not abuse them.

We have a responsibility to our friends and to respect their ideals. We should try to help them if we know they are heading for trouble.

It is a responsibility of a parent to discuss drinking and its effects with their children.

The school has a responsibility for teaching the facts about alcohol in an unbiased way.

Every teenager should have a right to decide for himself, whether to drink or not.

Parents are responsible for being consistent so that teenagers can know what to expect. Teenagers want guidelines.

We are responsible for telling others at home and in our school about this Conference.

The age limit for drinking should be abolished. If there were no restrictions, people wouldn't drink because the "fun" would be taken out.

Teenagers should be allowed to drink at the age of 18 if supervised by their parents.

The legal age should be 21, because at this point, people are mature enough to think for themselves.

Parents should decide whether or not their children should drink.

Drinking ages should be as follows: 18 – Beer; 21 – Liquor.

It is the responsibility of the parents to guide, teach and explain expected behavior patterns to their children. Some parents realize too late the actions they should have taken.

Many parents do not practice what they preach. They set the wrong example and then lecture against it.

We should have fewer restrictions, but they should be enforced. Sometimes the punishment is not strict enough, sometimes it is not the right kind. If the first punishment doesn't mean anything, then they most likely will do the same thing again.

The age limit should be 18 because at this age most people have finished high school and should be allowed to lead his own life.

Lots of kids drink because of the lack of parental supervision. Too many parents believe the "but everybody's doing it" line.

If the age limit was eliminated but regulations on drinking, driving and intoxication in general were enforced, the thrill would go out of drinking.

REGULATIONS

Rebellion is characteristic of growing up. If the age limit were lowered, the challenge would be reduced and drinking would not cause the issues it now does. The way it is now, some kids drink just to show off to others. If drinking were permitted at 18, it would reduce the value of their attention-getting behavior.

If 18 year olds could purchase alcohol here, it would decrease the number of driving accidents that occur when they go across state lines to get it. It would solve other problems too. They would likely buy smaller amounts than some of them do under the present system. Now they travel far; but large amounts to make the trip pay; can't store the alcohol for fear of being caught; so they drink it all, "you can't let that expensive stuff go to waste."

Many young people are permitted to marry before they are 21. If they are able to take on as big a responsibility as marriage, they should be permitted to drink. Others observed that a person who is mature enough to drive a car and fight for his country is mature enough to drink alcohol.

There is no legal age limit for drinking in Europe and they do not seem to have the problems we have. The exchange students from Europe cannot understand our restrictions. Most of them are used to drinking at home with their meals. It seems to be "no issue" with the foreign students in their native countries.

Age is not a sign of maturity. Most young people believe that they are more mature at 18 than their parents were when they were 18. However, there are some 21 year olds who are not as mature as the 18 year olds.

Some young people do not have much respect for the law. It depends on who you are in a community, whether you are arrested or not. There are lots of fathers who are more than willing to pay the \$25.00 fine, if their son or daughter is arrested for illegal drinking to keep them from getting a police record.

There should be a "drinking license" for 18 year olds who want to drink but do not want to break the law. Parents would give permission for getting the license. If the youth was caught in an intoxicated condition, the license would be taken away until he was 21.

Some teenagers drank wine with their parents when traveling in foreign countries, but are not allowed to do this at home. This causes frustration and rebellion.

There must be a change in attitude toward drinking before the laws can be changed or the legal age requirement abolished.

The legal age should be 18, because most teenagers drink anyway.

There should be a uniform legal drinking age in all states. The lower age requirement in neighboring states makes it necessary for teenagers to drive to New York, for example, some get "smashed" and get into accidents on the way home.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

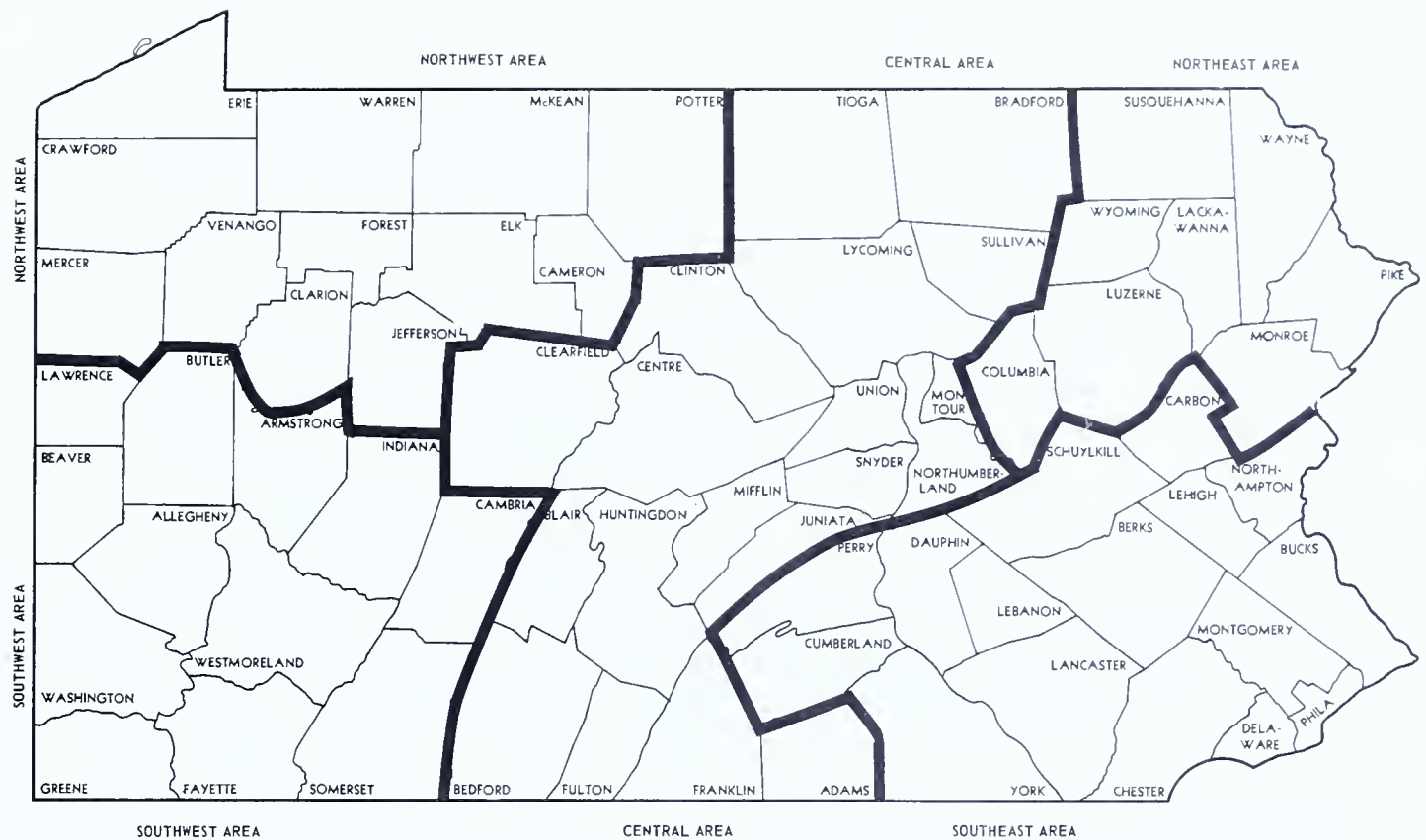
We, the youth, hold the key to the future! What becomes of the information and ideas exchanged during these conferences depends largely upon us.

When you return to your homes, think about what has transpired here today. Try to recall the points of the discussion groups, those with which you agreed or disagreed. Think about the facts, of the responsibility, yours and mine, and what can we do about the regulations. This conference was a meeting place where we could discuss what we know about alcohol and to learn what others know.

We found an interest among the adults which showed us that we could talk together, that they do care what we think and how we feel about things. Perhaps we have gained a confidence which will help us to communicate more easily with our parents, our friends and our teachers.

Soon it will be time for us to make some decisions about where we are going to live, what kind of work we will do, and how we will use our leisure time. We may need to ask ourselves "what shall I do about drinking?" The things we have learned here today may help us with that decision making, but what about those who were not here who may also have to make this decision.

Wouldn't it be great if we could have a conference like this in our own school or district? Perhaps we have a responsibility to see that we do. Where we go from here depends on you.



PROGRAM PRINCIPALS

NORTHWEST AREA – Kane and Meadville

Chairman: Jack Fecteau, Erie

Youth: Don Amann, Erie
 Kenneth Currie, Erie
 John Bauer, St. Marys
 Pamela Knapp, Port Alleghany
 Jean Olson, Bradford
 Donna Wassell, Erie
 Jon Hogue, Franklin
 Linda Barr, Meadville

SOUTHWEST AREA – Bridgeville and Norwin

Chairman: Reverend Keith Brown, Pittsburgh

Youth: Don Newman, Pittsburgh
 Kurt Haas, New Castle
 Gary Molinaro, Washington
 Wayne Peeler, Pittsburgh
 William Rodgers, Jr., Jeannette
 Timothy Manor, Butler
 Annie Grace, Pittsburgh

NORTHEAST AREA – Clarks Summit

Chairman: Joseph Szuhay, Ph.D., Scranton

Youth: Marc Hoffman, Kingston
Tom Welsch, Scranton
Paula Winchester, Wilkes-Barre
Linda Gorko, Factoryville
Larry Opert, Freeland

CENTRAL AREA – North – Williamsport

Chairman: George W. Teufel, Williamsport

Youth: Donna Spancake, Selinsgrove
Karen Spicher, Clearfield
Earl E. Young, Clearfield
Richard Kemery, Williamsport
John Bauer, St. Marys

CENTRAL AREA – South – Southern Huntingdon County

Chairman: W. Gerald Witt, Huntingdon

Youth: Larry Miller, Orbisonia
Don Newman, Pittsburgh
Charyl Edwards, Chambersburg
Mark Reed, Altoona
Betty Harding, Gettysburg
Merrie Oxnard, Alexandria
Alan Miller, Bedford

SOUTHEAST – Wyomissing

Chairman: Reverend Van Merle-Smith, Bethlehem

Youth: James McGee, Camp Hill
Paul Willston, Allentown
Jill Shiffer, Newport
Sam Cooper, Harrisburg
Diane Dombeck, Lancaster
Marvin Schmoyer, Allentown
Raymond Mather, Carson Long Institute

SOUTHEAST AREA – Plymouth – Whitmarsh

Chairman: Martin B. Christy, Jr., Philadelphia

Youth: Noreen Woods, Abington
Patricia Dunn, Levittown
Millard Russell, III, Philadelphia
Ann Johnson, West Chester
John Molinaro, Philadelphia
David Lowe, Abington

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to all who gave so generously of their time and efforts to make these conferences a meaningful experience for those in attendance. It is our hope that the information and opinions exchanged during these conferences will form a base upon which to build future programs on alcohol education for the young people of this Commonwealth.

In this message, we personally thank each person who helped in any way to plan, direct and conduct these Conferences. Our particular appreciation is extended to the Councils on Alcoholism, the many School Administrators, members of student councils, the press, radio and television stations. We give special recognition and thanks to the youth and adults who were responsible for planning the programs and making arrangements for each Conference.

We are deeply grateful to the Governor's Advisory Council on Alcoholism, the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the members of the staff of the Division of Alcoholism Studies and Rehabilitation.

